

SOARing

FALL 2016

NEWS FROM THE SOAR INSTITUTE

ISSUE 10

SOAR Institute Wins Award at State Conference

The Alabama Association for Developmental Education (ALADE) held its 30th Annual Conference on October 28, 2016, at Snead State Community College. One hundred five professionals representing two- and four-year institutions attended the one-day event. An awards ceremony culminated in the highest award given, Outstanding Developmental Education Program of the Year. Shelton State's SOAR Institute was named the recipient of this honor. Annette Cook, Veronica Cross, and Norquina Rieves accepted the award on behalf of the College.

Other highlights of the conference included breakout sessions and an inspiring keynote address from Robin Ozz, President of the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE). The highlight of her talk included news that NADE is presently collaborating with eight other national groups to provide professional development for educators. The other organizations include The American Association for Community Colleges, Achieving the Dream, Community College Research Center, Complete College America, Charles Dana Center, Education Commission for the States, Jobs for the Future, and Public Agenda. Ozz stressed how each professional who works with students in developmental classes, as a faculty member or support staff, needs to stay informed and aware of what is happening at the state and national levels. Attendees were also encouraged to share what they learn at professional development conferences with administrators and legislators.

Breakout sessions featured presenters from Gadsden State, J. F. Drake State, Miles College, Northwest-Shoals, Shelton State, Snead State, Southern Union, and Wallace Community College. The trio from Shelton State shared "The SOAR Institute: Five Years in a Nutshell." There was standing room only at the session, and feedback from those in attendance was phenomenal. NADE President Ozz returned to her home college in Arizona where she requested and has been approved to hire five navigators at her institution. She says, "I told them I stole the idea and the name 'navigators' from Shelton State in Alabama." SOAR staff will collaborate with Phoenix College as they make plans to begin intrusive advising with navigators for students in developmental classes. Additional feedback from attendees at the SOAR session included, "Every two-year college needs SOAR," "This was useful information that my institution could benefit from," and "I love what you guys are doing for students. Inspirational!" Other session titles included, "Adapting and Innovating through Universal Design for Learning," "Engaging Students through Critical Analysis of Urban Music Media," "Best Practices for ESL and Struggling Readers," "Strategies for Effective Grading in IRW," "Developmental Education 101," "Applying Editing and Grammar Skills through Student Collaboration," "Adapting the Developmental English Sequence for Student Success," and presentations from publishers.

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SHELTON STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESOURCES

The mission of the SOAR Institute of Shelton State Community College is to provide dedicated support to enhance the success of underprepared students.

Study Skills Courses

“Twenty minutes a day gets you an ‘A.’”

The instructional umbrella of the SOAR Institute includes study skills courses. Three courses in this division include Basic Study Skills (BSS 090), College Study Skills (BSS 118), and Career Planning and Personal Development (BSS 100). BSS 090 is a three credit-hour course that provides in-depth work on note taking skills, study habits, test taking skills, communication, memory techniques, and time management. BSS 118 is a one credit-hour course that provides a setting in which students can improve study behaviors and apply appropriate study strategies and techniques to the development of an effective study plan. BSS 100, a three credit-hour course, has been taught on occasion for specific cohort groups in technical programs.

One primary concept taught in all study skills courses is for students to commit to study twenty minutes per day for each class they are taking. The feedback on how well this technique works has been positive. Kathryn Gidley, lead instructor for study skills courses, discussed this practice with technical instructor Jerry Bobbitt. He, in turn, has passed the tip along to his students. This fall, he received the following message from one of his students. “First and foremost, thank you. Not only for your willingness to teach, but also for introducing me to the ‘20 minutes a day gets you an A’ rule. At first, I didn’t believe it until I took the time to try it. Not only did I get an ‘A’ in 20 minutes, but I was also able to maintain greater focus in my studies without feeling mentally overloaded with information. I encourage your future students to challenge themselves to this rule, so they can see the results for themselves.”

Orientation to College: What Students Are Saying

“Initially, when advised an Orientation to College course was required, I was baffled. I had prior college experience and an extreme amount of life lessons. What could this class possibly teach me? A month into the course, it had become one of my favorite classes. The instructor had a way of keeping you engaged. Through her teachings, I learned resourceful information about both Martin and Fredd campuses, SOAR, and how to be more proficient in my studies. She utilized assessments, brought in speakers, and gave helpful examples. My biggest discovery in this class occurred after taking a learning skills assessment. The result and extra literature provided helped me find a way to combine my artistic ability with studying. This has been a great way for me to learn. I am now retaining more information as I reap the benefits of enjoying art and less stress while studying. Orientation to College turned out to be just what I needed, a resourceful class with a very insightful instructor.”

“I am one of your ORI 101 students. I just want to say thank you, and that it was a pleasure to attend your classes! They were interesting, instructive, and full of useful information for which I am grateful. I earned my bachelor’s degree in teaching Spanish in Kyiv, Ukraine. Therefore, as an experienced student and a teacher, I think that Orientation to College should be available/required in every higher educational institution of the world. Students really need those tips and motivation on their way to success!”

ORI 101 is required to graduate from Shelton State Community College. This course, under the instructional umbrella of the SOAR Institute, is a one-hour course that is packed with helpful information for new students. The first day of the course includes basic college knowledge and the Keys to Student Success: Respect, Class Attendance, Study Habits, Communication, and Time Management. An introduction to myShelton and Canvas are critical for students, and both are included in this course. Students also participate in an amazing race that has students exploring campus to find specific departments.

The instructional team for ORI 101 is diverse. The group includes one full-time instructor and many adjunct instructors. The adjuncts provide a wealth of experience and expertise and include a former dean of instruction, instructors from other departments, retired instructors from the community, and several staff members. These professionals work together to create a standardized syllabus, share ideas, and provide the best course possible for SSCC students.

“...one of my favorite classes”



SOAR Personnel Spotlight

Each edition of *SOARing* features a SOAR staff member. This edition spotlights two SOAR staff members: Renee Marks and Wyetta Ryan.

A Conversation with Renee' Marks

What prompted you to apply for this position at Shelton State? "I felt like I needed a change from my current job. I didn't really know what the SOAR Institute was when I initially applied for the position. The more I read about SOAR, the more I wanted the job. After I met the staff and observed what they did on a daily basis, I knew this was the job for me."

Where did you work before coming to Shelton State? What was your position? What specifically did that job include? "I was employed at Tuscaloosa Christian School (TCS) for twelve years. I worked in the front office and the athletic department. I coached softball for six years. My girls won the state championship during my last coaching season. TCS was a great place to work."

Where did you attend college? What degree have you earned? "I attended Shelton State for two years and then transferred to the University of Alabama. I graduated from UA with a B.A. in Communications in May 1995."

Tell us where you grew up and what led you to pursue this profession. "I was born and raised in Tuscaloosa. I attended Tuscaloosa Christian School from K4 to 12th grade. I became a sound engineer by degree from UA, but I got involved with education by the grace of God. I was offered a position at TCS at the same time that my first child starting attending kindergarten there. The rest, as they say, is history."

Tell us about your family. "I have been married to Jerry Marks for 23 years. He is my polar opposite and the perfect man for me. We have two children: Sydney, age 19, and Jacob, age 17. Together, we form the cast of what we refer to as 'The Marks Sitcom.'"

What are some of your interests and hobbies?

"We are very involved in church activities, and we love our family time. My favorite color is purple. I love LSU football. I love to play video games like nobody else."

What has been the most challenging thing about working at Shelton State?

"The most challenging thing to me is to see students who have potential but aren't willing to work. Trying to motivate students can be so hard. But every once in a while, you find a connection."

What has been the most rewarding thing about working in SOAR?

"I love working with people. I have students who truly inspire me daily. I love working with the non-traditional students. Our students come from so many different backgrounds. Every student has a story and a struggle. Some students just need some extra encouragement and someone to be proud of them. I love watching students succeed!"

What do Renee's SOAR colleagues say about her?

"Renee' should be a stand-up comedian. This girl is hilarious."

"She is a great encourager and really cares about others. She notices when you aren't having a good day and offers to help."

Renee's favorite quotes often heard by colleagues:

"Our students are America's future."

"Live life like you live it."

"It's good to be Queen."



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A Conversation with Wyetta Ryan

What prompted you to apply for this position at Shelton State? "Shelton State Community College is a warm and welcoming environment. I knew that I wanted to work in a community college setting, and I also knew I wanted to work on the front line with students. As I read the mission statement of SOAR, I was compelled to apply. There are so many students who are underprepared and could be successful if they had dedicated support from their educators. With SOAR's implementation of intrusive advising, it has proven to produce better results for the students, which is one of the goals of academic success. I love working with students and being part of their accomplishments."

Where did you work before coming to Shelton State? What was your position? What specifically did that job include? "I was previously employed at the Department of Human Resources where I was a JOBS Case Manager. I was employed with the state for eight years. I worked with individuals from all scopes of the spectrum. As part of my duties, I worked with TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). We would help clients find gainful employment, enroll in college, or attain their GED. The goal was to transition the individuals into self-sufficiency by creating a solid foundation formulated with purpose and goals. Another one of my other duties was Kinship Care, where the agency helps assist relatives with the transition of new placement of children. I also assisted with SAIL (Special Assessment Intervention and Liaison) as a specialist. With this, I assisted clients who were in domestic violence situations and helped them escape to a place of safety. SAIL is also a program that also helps individuals obtain self-sufficiency and remove barriers, so the family can move forward productively."

Where did you attend college? What degree have you earned? "I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in History with a minor in Psychology and Sociology from Stillman College in 2003. I received my Master's degree in Forensic Psychology from Argosy University in 2016."

Tell us where you grew up and what led you to pursue this profession. "I have lived in Tuscaloosa the majority of my life. As a child, I was always solution-focused and wanted to meet the needs of others. Coming from a family of educators and a military-based background, it was inevitable that higher education was in my future. After I graduated high school, I attended Auburn University briefly, where I majored in psychology. I then had a paradigm shift and enrolled in the United States Army as a 91-Bravo Combat

Medic. I enjoyed the relationships that I made but realized that my passion for helping individuals was in a different arena. I played with the notion of being a social worker, counselor, and/or a therapist. I have had the professional experience of working as a social worker, and I currently interject therapeutic implications with my students when in distress, anxious, or needing a word of encouragement."

Tell us about your family. "I am the only child of my mother and a middle child of my father. I have a daughter, Kenyetta (my bundle of joy), who is 19, and a Shih Tzu, Kelly, who is nine months old."

What are some of your interests and hobbies? "In my free time, I enjoy walking and investing time with my family. Our lives are so complex in today's society; planning family time is key to me. Communication, integrated through fellowship and food, helps one appreciate and also value the time that one has. Although I was very athletic in high school and played basketball and volleyball, ran track, and participated in the marching and symphonic bands, my interests have shifted in some areas over the years. I absolutely love singing, playing volleyball, and reading (motivational and romantics). I also enjoy coaching middle school and high school students in basketball."

What has been the most challenging thing about working at Shelton State? "It warms my heart to see individuals reach milestones in life, no matter how big or small. When an individual gives up or chooses to settle for less, it is a challenge for me...when one chooses to opt out, when there is so much potential. One of the most disappointing experiences to see is a person walk away from his or her gift, talent, or purpose."

What has been the most rewarding thing about working in SOAR? "One of the most rewarding experiences that I have working in SOAR is the relationships. We are a family; we love, laugh, and cry together. This in itself is very rare, and for that, I am grateful. Along with that, the relationships with my students are rewarding. It is so fulfilling to be part of a student's success, help prioritize, and help remove barriers that seemed impossible. To watch a student walk across the stage is as breath-taking as having a student pass a class that he or she feared the most."

Is there any additional information you would like to share? "Life is full of treasures. When you receive some, be kind and pass to others so that more of the world can experience the wealth. You may be the only person to inspire and be the light in a person. Helping students change their life through the adversities speaks volumes, and I am thankful that I have been entrusted with this responsibility."